

THE DARK AGE OF MEDIEVAL JEWRY

Persecution, Expulsion, the End of the Paris Synagogue

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THE spontaneous celebration to which Paris awakened on an August night in 1165 when Philip Augustus—one of the mightiest soldier-kings of the Middle Age—was born, heralded unknowingly another birth as well. It was the first true display of French national devotion, rather than feudal allegiance, to a prince. The modern European state, in a sense, dates from that outburst of popular rejoicing.

As bells rang out the good news, and criers roused the populace, the citizens of the capital rose from their beds with an enthusiasm that the Middle Age had come to expect only on religious occasions. They were swept with patriotism. The dark streets were suddenly brightened by torches. The students marched through the Left Bank, shouting their Latin songs. On the Rive Droite, already the business half of the city, merchants and artisans lifted brimming goblets. And from the Palace on Ile-de-la-Cité messengers galloped to

the Cathedral; to the walled abbeys on both sides of the river; and farther, across the sleeping land, to the corners of the realm which, after his great victory at Bouvines in 1214, Philip Augustus was to double in size. Then, to the sound of trumpets, the churches were thrown open and the people hastened to offer thanks to the Lord who after a delay of almost thirty years had finally given them a male heir to the Crown.

The Jews of Paris joined the celebration gladly, as they had for centuries in every local demonstration of civic pride. They thronged the Synagogue, and chanted prayers in the dark, passionate music the 12th century adored. In truth, they had reason to hope for the perpetuation of the Capet Dynasty, which now seemed assured by the birth of the baby prince. The Capets had been generous sovereigns. Philip's father and grandfather in particular had shown the Jews a spirit of religious toleration which—although it must not be confused with tolerance in the modern sense—was rare for medieval Europe. The Royal Domain of Ile de France was a haven for the Jew, who since the First Crusade had found himself persecuted throughout the West. The Paris community had not only escaped the bloody Crusader pogroms of the turn of the century; it had also been spared the new wave of anti-Semitic brutality that coincided with the Second Crusade of 1146. As Jews perished in Normandy, the Rhineland, and the distant valley of the Danube, their brethren in Paris had prospered in relative peace.

THE tolerant policy of the Capets had not been entirely disinterested. As France slowly emerged from the chaos of the Dark Age, as life improved and society expanded in every way, as cities grew and population increased, and the arts rose on the great swell of the Romanesque and the Gothic Transition, the presence of the Jewish financier was a necessity. The projects of an

IT WAS in the high Middle Ages, at the time of the First Crusade, that Christian Europe launched upon an anti-Semitic course which ultimately drove most of the Jews of the West eastward into the confines of the Russo-Polish Pale. Before that time, in the early Middle Ages, the Jew was a man like any other man, marked out hardly at all from his neighbors, whether in occupation, speech, or dress. Against the vivid tapestry of medieval life and history ALLAN TEMKO shows us these first fateful steps of the European polity along the path of anti-Semitism. Mr. Temko's previous articles in COMMENTARY on medieval Jewish life in France include "The King, the Bishop, and the Jew" (February 1953) and "The Burning of the Talmud in Paris" (May 1954). In the fall Viking Press is bringing out his book, *Notre-Dame of Paris*. A graduate of Columbia, he was born in 1924 in New York City. He has been living in Paris for the past several years, and, among his other activities, has lectured at the Sorbonne.

age which built dozens of abbeys and cathedrals, and which in a single century flung itself no less than four times against the Moslem East, often required hard money more quickly than the landed wealth of feudalism could provide it. Christians, who were forbidden by the Church to charge interest, were reluctant to make loans on a selfless basis. The Jewish banker, until the rise of the Lombards, had a virtual monopoly.

In spite of his special position in medieval finance, the Jew was never as rich as some have claimed. If he did amass a private fortune, he could not invest it in the major source of feudal wealth: estates worked by bound serfs. Further, in a culture that frequently resorted to force, the position of the Jewish creditor was perilous, since for practical purposes he was denied the use of the sword in retaliation. But this is not the whole story. The Jew was not invariably a money-lender. He practiced crafts as an artisan, sold goods as a merchant, and when he could, farmed and cultivated vines. This alone indicates that he may not have relished the position of usurer which the Christian majority peremptorily tried to assign him. Many Jews and Christians would have crossed professional lines, as indeed the Lombards and Cahorsins did, if the moat of religious difference had not been so deep.

It remains, however, that at a time when liquid wealth was scarce, the Jewish money-lender was called upon to provide it at short notice. He did so, at interest rates that may seem astonishing: as high as 40 or 50 per cent of the principal in twelve months. At the same time—and here his risk should be recalled—he demanded heavy collateral: either a mortgage of property or labor, or the pawn of *objets d'art* for which the museums of the world compete today. No group could have been saddled with the exclusive charge of such dealings without resentment, and through the Middle Age that resentment quivered beneath the fabric of society like a scaly beast which no Saint George has ever finished off. The myths it manufactured still beat about the world, strange tales of sorcery and ritual death whispered by illiterates. In the 12th century the political results of this resentment ended in the expulsion of the Jews from the hitherto friendly Kingdom of France, and the loss of the Paris Synagogue.

TO UNDERSTAND the position of the Jew in Paris in 1165, we must first imagine the medieval city that was spreading to every side, pushing out the limits of the *faubourgs* on either bank so that, when Philip Augustus walled the perimeter from 1190 to 1210, the ramparts enclosed seventy-five thousand people—five times the city's population in the Dark Age. This Paris was still rural, with very much the atmosphere of a country town, and lived on close terms with the surrounding fields and forest of tall oaks. In good weather its gardens, open squares, and magnificent river shore made it a remarkably pleasant place to live. Its odors, like those of villages today where *confort moderne* is unknown, may have been little worse than a farm's. As Lewis Mumford and other observant critics have noted, medieval Paris was scarcely the pool of filth that Victorian scholars described with a shudder. Its baths were used for bathing, and did not become "stews" until the Renaissance.

Intellectually, no city has been more alive. Its schools were the most famous in the Occident, and set the philosophic tone for the entire Middle Age. The "oven," one contemporary called them, in which the world's intellectual bread was baked. Its architecture was, of course, superb. The ordinary homes, to judge from 12th-century houses standing elsewhere, were solidly built, exquisitely decorated, and as well lighted as their designers could make them. Its religious edifices were as lovely as any Western civilization has created.

Bisecting the city in a straight north and south line, splitting it like an apple, was the Roman road: the *vicus magnus* which now has lost almost all but its historical importance, but still crosses Paris in a broad, powerful stroke through the center of the island. In the 12th century, spanning the two channels of the Seine on the Grand and the Petit Pont, it was one of the major arteries of commerce and religion in the world. To the north, as Rue St.-Martin, it led to Amiens and the industries of Flanders. Southward, it was a route of the soul. It belonged to "Monsieur Saint Jacques"—Saint James of Compostella—and for five hundred years was crowded with pilgrims on foot to his magical shrine on the Atlantic coast of Spain. The tiny central stretch of this highway, no more than three hundred yards

from bridge to bridge on the island, is now called Rue de la Cité. The Middle Age knew it as the Juiverie.

Here, and in the cramped alleys that border the Left Bank opposite, Jews had lived for a full thousand years. Except for a brief exile by King Dagobert in the 7th century, they had resided continuously beside the Seine since, as traders, they had followed Caesar's legions north into Gaul. They had settled early in the splendid Gallo-Roman city of Lutetia, first on the undefended southern shore, and later, when the German tribes threatened, within the fortified Cité; and with the rest of the Roman world, they had suffered the consequences of the barbarian triumph. In the lawless age that followed, the long night of the Merovingians, Jewish fortunes, like those of everyone else, fluctuated with amazing speed and violence. There was the momentary calm of Charlemagne, but in the Norman invasions of the 9th century, and in the baronial anarchy of the 10th and 11th, the Jew suffered again.

THESE misfortunes, it should be emphasized, were largely common ones, shared with the rest of the battered and demoralized population. The view of the Dark Age as an epoch of incessant terror for the Jew must be reconsidered. Rarely, until the later Middle Age, was he singled out as the enemy whose squalid caricature was formalized in the Prioress's Tale. He suffered mistreatment that was at times severe, yet of a sporadic and limited nature. He was subjected to a pariah code that in theory would have made life intolerable, but in practice was often ignored or lightly enforced. One reason for this was that Judaism and Christianity were closer in these early centuries—closer in mood, ritual, and official doctrine—than they have been since. In a world that had not seen the last of paganism, the Jew was after all a monotheistic creature whose sacred books not only held fundamental truth of God the Father, but, to Christian theologians, the most vivid promise of Jesus the Son. Jewish proselytism could, and occasionally did, attract Christian converts. Beyond this, although it would later change, the attitude of Rome was mild. Certain popes, like Saint Gregory the Great, displayed astonishing width of mind in their relations with the Jews. Kings, too, had a

tendency to befriend Jews, and establish them at court as physicians, linguists, and caterers of precious stuffs. Charlemagne, typically, included an intriguing figure named Isaac in his diplomatic embassy to Haroun-el-Raschid. He was the only one of the mission to return, with gifts that included an elephant.

As long as the West lay prostrate, as the pulse of trade slackened, and barter clumsily replaced money and banking, when man scratched what living he could from before the encroaching forest, the Jew was externally indistinguishable from the common mass. He spoke the common Roman language which was slowly twisting into French; he dressed without special markings in common fashion; he shared common tastes and habits, including the taste for violence; he lived where he chose, side by side with Christians; and when France began to rally under the Capets, from about the year 1000 on, and moved towards the society that built Vézelay and Chartres, the Jew climbed to a new and better life with the entire nation.

It is interesting to visualize the Juiverie in those expanding times, astride the central trade route that had so long remained inactive. The Ile-de-la-Cité, the kernel of France, was a microcosm of medieval life, divided in equal halves by the busy commercial street. The Synagogue at its center looked out on an unending pageant of pilgrims, merchants, priests, and warriors, nobles who rode on chargers to the Palace, and bishops who led chanting multitudes to the Cathedral. The western end of the Ile was the property of the Capets: the dour feudal castle whose turrets dominated the humble roofs beneath its walls. The eastern end was that mysterious province in which the historian finds it easy to lose his way: the territory of the medieval Church, consecrated with indescribable fervor to Notre Dame. Eventually the street of the business man would widen and branch until it enveloped both Palace and Cathedral, but then the Middle Age would be over, and the Jew would have left his ancient emplacement forever.

TO BELIEVE the chroniclers, however—and it is good to remember that they were Church writers with special causes to plead—the Jews were already doing fabulously

well as businessmen by the middle of the 12th-century. Rigord, a monk of Saint-Denis, asserts flatly that they owned no less than half the dwellings in Paris. Not a single modern historian has believed him. And with reason. The greatest holder of real estate in the capital was easily the Church. The Cathedral alone possessed vast tracts of land and hundreds of buildings within the city proper and outside the walls; the powerful Abbeys of Saint-Denis, Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and Sainte-Geneviève each owned almost as much. When these holdings were added to those of the Crown, there was not much left for anyone else. Perhaps Rigord was speaking of what remained. But even in this case he may have exaggerated. Still, it should be noted that he wrote for contemporaries, and meant to be believed. In any case, his statement leaves no doubt whatever of the economic freedom accorded the Jews by Philip's father, Louis VII, and indicates that they owned a sizable amount of real property in Paris and the vicinity.

It is known, for example, that they held title to their own homes. Most of these houses were in the Juiverie itself, and the adjoining streets. They did not form a solid block, but rather were peppered through the heart of the island in the midst of Christian dwellings whose appearance was no different from their own. Perhaps the community extended westward directly into the protective enclosure of the Palace, where there was a Rue de Jerusalem and another called the Rue de Nazareth. The names, like the names of all medieval streets, may be a clue to the identity of their original residents, but these are more likely to be souvenirs of the Crusades or of pilgrimages to the Holy Land. To the east of the island, residence was closed to Jews by the Cloister of Notre-Dame and other dependencies of the Cathedral.

But by the second half of the 12th century a movement away from Ile-de-la-Cité had already begun among the Jews. The commercial energy of the island was spilling rapidly across the Grand Pont to the recently established Halles on the Right Bank. The Jews quickly saw the future of these great markets, and moved near them; and it is worth remarking that they live by choice in that same neighborhood today. In the bustling area north of the Rue de Rivoli, between the Halles and the

Place des Vosges, selling a variety of vivid merchandise, are the Jews who have returned to the same spot after every exile through the centuries, from the expulsion of Philip Augustus to the frightful retreat from Hitler in 1940. The quarter is mistakenly called the "ghetto." There was never an "official" ghetto in Paris; even during the most severe persecutions of the Middle Age and modern times, the Jews have never been confined to one district by law.

ON THE Left Bank the Jewish community retained some of its ancient character. Beside the Petit Pont were the shops of the spice merchants who since Merovingian days had been *negotiatores* of exotic goods in France: pepper, dates, and silks; aphrodisia and gems. Off Rue Galandé, probably well hidden by surrounding structures, was the Jewish cemetery, one of the oldest in northern Europe. And high on the hill of Sainte-Geneviève, where the Faculties stand, were vineyards owned by Jews. Beyond, in the fields, they almost certainly possessed farms.

Did the Jews work their land themselves? The question is open. The indignation of the Church against Jewish use of Christian manual labor indicates that in general they did not. Nevertheless, there was no Christian monopoly on humble toil. Sauval, a 17th-century historian who had recourse to documents and oral traditions now lost, speaks of a class of Jewish "artisans" who lived largely on the Right Bank. Precisely what crafts they followed he does not say, but it might be recalled that in East European nations which remained feudal until modern times, Jews bulked large in skilled labor—as carpenters, shoemakers, and tailors, to name only three *métiers* they could have held in the 12th century, before the guild system had fully developed its mystical Christian emphasis and was closed permanently to them. By Talmudic injunction, Jews operated their own wine-presses, whose existence we know of from documents, and may also have sold their wine commercially. Kosher butchers slaughtered cattle in the Boucherie, and disposed of the forbidden cuts of meat to Christian purchasers. There is another interesting possibility. The Juiverie, in course of time, became known as "the place where bread is baked." True, the earliest references to these bakeries date only

from the 13th century, after the Jews had been expelled and recalled, but they provide a rich source of conjecture. The ovens and wheat market which later became famous seem to have been in operation well before 1200, and already situated in the Juiverie. Jewish bread has always been celebrated, and Jewish bakers may still have been permitted, in the 12th century, to supply it to the entire community.

THE size of the Jewish population at this time remains a riddle. When Philip Augustus permitted the Jews to return after sixteen years in exile, forty households, the names of whose heads are known, came back immediately. This means more than forty families. A Jewish household in the Middle Age resembled a small clan, with the families of numerous sons and cousins assembled under a single patriarch. There might have been one hundred such households before the expulsion, whose minor relations and Jewish servants could have brought the total number to two or three thousand. Perhaps twenty-five hundred Jews in a city of seventy-five thousand is not too wild a guess.

These Jews habitually spoke French. They used the national language, as Theodore Reinach pointed out, even for sacred readings of the Pentateuch. And as far as the social organization permitted, they were French. They took French family names and soubriquets: Bonnefoy, Bonami, Châtelain; and modified, or translated into French, their Hebrew given names. Isaac thus became Haquin; Joseph, Jossé; Chaim was delightfully rendered Vivant.

Vivant! A lively place, the Juiverie, with all the freshness and vitality of the best moment of the Middle Age. And its life centered in the Synagogue, whose history went back at least six hundred years and possibly much longer. The temple was placed at the exact heart of the island, near the intersection of the Juiverie and the Rue des Marmousets, on the eastern side of the road, midway between the two bridges. Its sanctuary was oriented towards Jerusalem, as Christian shrines were, and did not stand free, but was hemmed on either side by buildings which may have been religious in purpose or simple dwellings. Some nearby structure, if not the Synagogue itself, must

have served as a hostel for strangers—a necessity for an age that was always on the move. The Synagogue also must have housed the School, which was a brilliant, if extremely modest, counterpart of the great academic centers of the Church. The Jews of northern France had a rich intellectual tradition whose beginnings lay in the revival of letters at the time of Charlemagne. The School of Paris rivaled those at Troyes and Worms, which were renowned for rabbinical learning. The Doctors of the Paris Synagogue were famous, too, and the chroniclers mention them respectfully. There was no pretension to Latin scholarship of a high order (manuscript glosses, as a rule, were made in purest medieval French), but there was accomplished knowledge of Hebrew. Moreover, Jews were familiar with Greek and Arabic at a time when few Christians could read these crucial scientific languages; and it is significant that mathematics and other sciences from the East, thrice translated from Greek to Arabic to Hebrew to Latin, and ported overland on a long detour through the Spain of Maimonides, arrived in France at the very moment the Gothic began probing heaven with its vaults and spires.

Today, the medieval character of the Juiverie has been destroyed—a victim of Baron Haussmann and the city-planning of the Second Empire. Not one Parisian in a thousand looks up as his autobus passes through Rue de la Cité, and not one in ten thousand is aware that the street was ever called the Juiverie. But on misty nights, when the gas-lamps hover like ghosts in the air, and the towers of Notre-Dame lift against the moon, we may grasp for an instant the beauty that once resided in this place, and the poignancy that shall not return.

Now, as time passes, watch the Cathedral rise. There are few better symbols of the sweep of medieval history than the construction of Notre-Dame. Two years before the birth of Philip Augustus, in 1163, the Parisians had finally entered the great contest of architectural beauty that was taking place everywhere in the Ile de France. They had taken the bold decision to rase and entirely reconstruct their venerable Carolingian cathedral, now three centuries old and hopelessly out of date for the taste and

needs of a revived nation. The confining Gallo-Roman rampart was broken through, and a new shrine erected to the Virgin that for its time was the most ambitious monument in Christendom.

For one hundred and fifty years, until the last work was completed early in the 14th century, the Juiverie resounded to the whips of the teamsters driving ox-carts down from the quarries on the Left Bank, across the Petit Pont, and then swinging off to the right on the Rue Neuve Notre-Dame, which Bishop Maurice de Sully had cut through to the Juiverie to facilitate the transport of materials to the tip of the island. The Jews took pride in their city's superb creation. Perhaps, as they did elsewhere, they sent a formal delegation to the laying of the first stone. In any case they marveled with the rest of the Occident at the daring of the high vaults: thirty-two and a half meters above the stone pavements—something more than one hundred and five feet, as against twenty-four meters for Laon and Sens, its nearest rivals. Notre-Dame was the tallest building yet attempted in the West, and the Jews shared its Gothic taste, as they had unforgettably shared the Romanesque at Worms, and were later to adore the Renaissance when they built lavish synagogues in Provence. Beyond this, they were deeply interested—in the French sense of *intérêt*—in the success of the project.

A GLANCE at the choir of Notre-Dame reveals the enormous common effort required to construct it in less than twenty years, from 1163 to 1182: precisely the moment of Jewish history that concerns us. To equip such a structure with stained glass, tapestries, and carvings, employing only the finest workmanship and materials, made a demand on the Cathedral treasure that even its vast resources could not meet. The Gothic cathedrals were not financed by the sale of indulgences; Saint Peter's of Rome and Prince Tetzels belong to an altogether different world of the spirit as well as of art. There were the offerings of the great and the humble, true, but in the main the Bishop drew on his legitimate revenues from fiefs that stretched to every part of the kingdom, to Champagne, Brittany, and Poitou. The Cathedral controlled dozens of towns and smaller communities, several immense

forests, innumerable fields, mills, and granaries that in good years would show a handsome profit. In lean years the feudal economy was paralyzed, and the Bishop was forced to borrow. As collateral, he did not hesitate to pawn the jewels and altar vessels of his church.

A curious piece of evidence reveals that Bishop Maurice de Sully entered into such dealings with the bankers of the Juiverie. In the midst of the popular enthusiasm for the Gothic a few lonely and angry voices arose. A generation earlier, Saint Bernard had attacked the Romanesque with all his caustic genius. Now, in the Chapter of the Cathedral of Paris, a theologian named Pierre le Chantre castigated the Gothic. In his *Summa Ecclesiastica*, composed shortly after 1180, he speaks of the "disease of building"—*morbis aedificandi*—which had seized France. "To construct as is done at present is to sin," he went on bitterly: "churches should be humble . . . but today they are built higher and higher." If there were any doubt about what he was referring to, Pierre soon made it clear that he had his own cathedral and bishop in mind. He questions the necessity of luxurious episcopal residences, and all of Paris knew that Bishop Maurice was simultaneously building a palace as well as a cathedral. This is one hint. But then Pierre has a few words on the financing of church construction: ". . . cathedrals are built nowadays with the usury of avarice (*usuris avarorum*), with lies of deception and the deception of liars, preachers, and mercenaries; and these evilly acquired resources shall bring their ruin. . . ." Maurice de Sully was a celebrated preacher; his sermons were famous throughout Europe. He also had a certain reputation as a skillful talker in negotiations which Pierre le Chantre, as an official of the Chapter, had reason to know.

If this were not proof enough, there is another fascinating manuscript which confirms the quarrel of Pierre and Bishop Maurice. This account is attributed to Caesarius of Heisterbach, a completely different sort of writer, whose anecdotes are pure medieval delight. According to Caesarius, after Maurice had spent all of his own moneys on the still unfinished structure (*structuram operis inchoati*), he obtained *plurimas infinitasque pecunias ex usuris*—varied and limitless funds from moneylend-

ers. Maurice seems not to have had a troubled conscience. He proceeded to erect the nave which is even more mighty and splendid than the choir, and when he died in 1196, the great central vessel of Notre-Dame was virtually completed.

THE drama was building, in the carved rock of the Cathedral. About 1170, two of its leading characters sat for their portraits in stone. In the tympanum of the Portail Sainte-Anne, to either side of one of the most majestic Virgins of the Middle Age, a bishop stands, and a king kneels. The bishop is Maurice de Sully in vigorous middle life: bearded, staunch, capable; visibly that gifted and ambitious son of peasants which we know him to be. His pontifical robes are magnificent—they rival the Byzantine gown of the Virgin!—but we are drawn to the figure of the king. His very foot speaks. Never has royalty been depicted with such grace and idealism. Excessively idealized, a captious critic might add. Yet the characterization is not exaggerated. The man is very nearly a religious fanatic. He has often knelt barefoot—here, at the doors of the Cathedral—begging forgiveness for real or imagined offenses against the Lord. The gorgeously pleated folds of his penitent's gown and cloak must be laid to the charge of the sculptor, for this king meant them to be models of austerity. The same must be said for the beautifully trimmed beard and elaborate coiffure which so lightly supports the crown. As no other King of France, except his great-grandson Saint Louis, he is the "eldest son of the Church"—Defender of the Faith, but a very poor Protector of the Realm.

He is Louis VII, father of Philip Augustus, fifty years old if it is actually 1170, with a decade of life ahead. He is no longer Louis le Jeune, the chivalrous hothead who took the throne at seventeen, the bridegroom of Eleanor of Aquitaine, who divorced her (together with half his kingdom) after his disastrous expedition to the Holy Land; and who since has become Louis the Pious, a royal mystic, a sovereign who more than any diversion prefers vespers in the new Cathedral, when the afternoon sun lights the glass, and the music of the choir soars and mingles with the rising lines of the architecture.

The intervention of the Papacy alone

saved France from ruin during his last years. To the east, the Empire threatened Champagne and Burgundy, and crossed the breadth of Provence to command the Rhone at Arles. On his western flank, Henry Plantagenet—Henry II of England, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, Count of Anjou—had acquired territory that Philip Augustus would spend a lifetime recovering by force of arms. The Capets ruled a narrow strip of central France from Paris to Bourges; Amiens, Rouen, Tours and Poitiers were lost; Bordeaux would not be recovered for centuries, and retains a certain English character to this day.

The people, with their growing sense of patriotism, looked to the young Prince Philip. Charming stories were told of his precocity. At the age of four he was presented, in the field, to Henry of England, who with poor grace spoke a few words to him and prepared to gallop away. The child called him back, and with the courtesy which seems to have belonged to the Gothic age alone, beseeched the powerful monarch "to love his father, France, and himself—Philip, and so obtain the grace of God and men." A few years later, when he was nine, the prince calmly announced that one day he would retake the stronghold of Gisors in the Vexin, at the gates of the Royal Domain, which his father had foolishly given up to Henry. Then, in 1179, Louis suffered a paralytic stroke. He lingered another year, but Philip had been already anointed and crowned at Rheims, and at the age of fourteen was in fact the King of France.

PHILIP's first important act, eight months before the death of his father, was to move dramatically against the Jews. On a Sabbath morning in February, 1180, royal sergeants entered the synagogues and seized every Jewish man, woman, and child in the kingdom. The arrest was brutal. They were stripped of their "gold, silver, and clothing"—which included the lovely Syrian prayer shawls we see in cathedral sculptures—"as they themselves stripped the Egyptians before their departure." The secret of the *coup* seems to have been carefully guarded. The chroniclers speak of no spectacular escapes, no favored exceptions. This reversal of the time-honored Capetian policy of tolerance was totally unexpected.

In modern times it has become a fashion for new regimes immediately to stage theatrical effects; the death of a medieval king could alter the face of a nation in a matter of days. Both past and present, however, new rulers who feel themselves vulnerable have usually obeyed what they interpret to be the popular will. Here the boy king and his advisors, to believe the chronicles, appear to have been on safe ground. The monk Rigord and other eulogists indicate that the Christian masses—on whom Philip had to rely if he were to survive—were solidly behind the move.

Were they, truly? Prejudice—strong prejudice—existed without question. Until this stroke of demagoguery, its local degree of intensity at Paris was a matter of doubt. The absence of anti-Semitic violence in the capital was notorious to contemporary bigots. On the other hand, the explosions of religious hatred that shook the entire West during the First and Second Crusades were not created out of the air. The word "Jew" had been used as a Christian insult before the fall of Rome. And although the Royal Domain of France had been spared Crusader butcheries, the great feudal provinces had not. News of outbreaks filtered into Paris from Normandy, Touraine, and Champagne, together with myths of witchcraft. These were sensationalized by itinerant preachers, enlarged by popular ignorance, and inflamed by national misfortune until, by the closing years of the 12th century, the common picture of the Jew had been unrecognizably transformed.

In 1171 a tale of ritual murder in France electrified the realm. A small boy, drowned in the Loire, was reported to have been first tormented and then cast in the river by the Jews of Blois. The Count of Blois promptly burned alive fifty-one unfortunates—the entire Jewish population of the city. The tales quickly multiplied. Easter was conceded to be the season when Jews particularly relished the blood of Gentile children, but any other Christian holiday would do almost as well. Then, in 1179, as old Louis VII lay dying, the body of young Richard of Pontoise—one of the most venerated corpses of the Middle Age—was added to the list of victims.

Pontoise is only twenty miles from Paris, and was too small a community to retain

such a relic. The dead child was transported to the capital, and placed in the chapel of the cemetery of the Holy Innocents (medieval theologians could find a Biblical analogy for any occasion) and his tomb became a center of pilgrimage. His passion was recorded in stained glass, in stone, in songs to which Chaucer listened. For centuries, too, the gateway of the burial ground would carry an inscription which read: "Beware of a Jew, a madman, and a leper." Prince Philip, himself a child and in danger, was singularly moved by the superstitious tale.

THE bishops said little, but to some extent the highest quarters of the Church were to be blamed for this state of affairs. Since the declamations of Agobard in the 9th century, whom Cecil Roth has termed the "father of medieval anti-Semitism," the attitude of Rome had deteriorated. The pagan had vanished, and the infidel had become the foremost living source of Christian doubt. The Saracen, of course, was Satan. Because of the joint Judeo-Christian heritage the position of the Jew was less clear.

In general, the great prelates of the century had been disposed to believe in the possibility of Jewish salvation. When Innocent II visited Saint-Denis in 1131, and the Jews of Paris took part in his welcome by presenting him with a Torah, the Pope accepted the scroll with some grace. Then, reflecting as he removed the embroidered silks which protected the parchment, he expressed the wish that Almighty God might eventually lift the veil of disbelief from their hearts. Saint Bernard—the soul of the Church Universal—had intervened when the mobs of Crusaders were gathering, and spoken with all his unique force against bloodshed. The Saint agreed that the Jew must wander and suffer as an outcast for his sins, but he demanded Christian justice on earth for a fellow child of the Lord. But the Abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable, held a less lofty view, which the clergy as a whole adopted after the death of Bernard. "*Exsecrandi et odio habendi sunt Judaei, non ut occidantur admoneo*," he thundered: Hate and execrate, but do not slay them. An age that reached for the sword continually could not distinguish between one and the other.

When anti-Jewish feeling was at its

height, Rome aggravated the situation. The Lateran Council of 1179—the year when the incident at Pontoise horrified Christendom—decided to clarify the status of the Jew so that it would never again be questioned. The contamination was to be removed by making him untouchable. All the random proscriptions of the Dark Age were gathered together and codified, preparing the way for the Council of 1215, which in turn led directly to the Inquisition, the ghetto, and the marked costume. When Louis VII did not instantly comply with the decisions of the Council, Alexander III wrote him stinging letters. But the aged king could not easily change the habits of a lifetime. One of his last acts was to confirm the rights of Jews, through their own bailiffs, to collect debts legitimately owed them.

PHILIP's *razzia* against the Jews, then, served a double political purpose. It ingratiated him with Pope Alexander, giving the French crown an even closer bond with the most precious ally in Europe: for the Holy See's moral prestige was worth a dozen armies. At the same time he established a base of popular enthusiasm for his reign, which in the form of a French national army would break down the walls of Château Gaillard, take Normandy, Anjou, and Touraine, and on the plain of Bouvines vanquish the combined armies of Germany and Flanders. Foot-sergeants and crossbowmen were to do more to gain his victories than mounted chevaliers.

Philip's biographer, Rigord, strangely lists neither of these motives. The monk has five reasons of his own. First, there was the abnormal freedom of the Jews in France, a situation crying for correction. Then there were those abominable murders in subterranean caverns at Easter, deliberately perpetrated at this time to outrage Christians in mourning for the Crucifixion. The last three reasons are really one: the financial standing of the Parisian Jews.

Rigord asserts that not only did the Jews own half the dwellings in the city and surrounding country, but that every class of society was in debt to them—bourgeois, peasants, soldiers. Those who could not pay, the monk adds, were confined to debtors' prisons which he says were located in the usurers' homes, private jails in which Chris-

tians were held by sacred oath if not by actual iron bars. Next came a charge of profanation of liturgical articles placed in pawn by the clergy: Jewish babies drank wine from chalices, and dipped their cakes in them. But—and here is the final reason—the Jews, fearing a search for these holy vessels, had hidden a golden, jeweled crucifix, an Evangile encrusted with gems, and various silver cups and sacramental vases—in a latrine! Divine revelation (*Domino revelante*) led Christians to the place of concealment, and these sullied treasures were restored to the Church.

All this is curious, coming from a Church writer, in view of what we know of the indebtedness of the Cathedral of Paris to the Juiverie. Saint-Denis, Rigord's own abbey, also had a long-standing association with the moneylenders, and we may assume that other monasteries—Saint-Germain-des-Prés, for example, which like Saint-Denis had recently rebuilt its abbey church—had similar obligations. To be rid of the Jews was to be rid of these debts.

THE Jews did not long remain imprisoned. They were allowed almost immediately to ransom their persons and their seized belongings for fifteen thousand marks payable to the Crown. The sum has little meaning today, but its enormity may be appreciated by what it could buy in kind. Fifteen thousand marks was enough to purchase a small barony. Indeed, two decades later, when Philip Augustus was conquering Normandy with his exchequer as well as his troops, he bought the lands and castle of a minor lord for just half that amount: fifteen thousand pounds—since a mark was commonly worth two pounds or *livres parisis*.

For comparison with modern values, however, less lordly purchases may be more to the point. A fine residence cost one hundred fifty to two hundred *livres*, complete with gardens. But a solid dwelling could easily be found for a third as much—forty-six *livres*, to name a typical price. Keeping this in mind, if we were to estimate the value of a first-rate medieval home as ten thousand dollars of our money, and translate this conservatively as one hundred *livres*, the Jews were assessed the round equivalent of \$3,000,000.

This extortion replenished the Royal

Treasure, which had been low. The Jews were freed, and may have been looking forward to a new period of calm. The usual technique in the Middle Age was to permit the magical goose to fatten.

Then an odd incident occurred. In the Bois de Vincennes, on the eastern edge of Paris, a colony of hermits had been set up that resembled the visionary settlement in the Thebaid. The Bois are a short bus ride from the heart of the city today; in the Middle Age they were reached after a pleasant walk. The woods were thick enough to give the impression of wildness, but not so menacing as to scare off visitors; and the Parisians, when they wished a dream interpreted or a special prayer said, or advice on any subject, would go to the isolated cells of the monks and ask for counsel. The holy men did not refuse, nor did they expect reward, for in the words of Anatole France: "*ces moines méprisaient les richesses et l'odeur de leurs vertus montait jusqu'au ciel.*" The most famous of these oracles, today almost forgotten, was Pierre Bernard de Bré, or du Coudrai, known to the people simply as Frère Bernard. One day in 1180 Philip rode out to the Bois to consult him on the Jewish problem.

For a man removed from the world, the recluse had a rather worldly answer. He advised the King to liberate his subjects from their debts, except for one-fifth of the principal—the monk stipulated the percentage—to be paid directly to the Crown. Philip carried out these instructions as they were given.

Two years then passed, swiftly and in silence in Rigord's chronicle, painfully slow for the Jews who awaited Philip's next step. It was extreme. In the spring of 1182, whether on Frère Bernard's advice is unknown, the King decided on banishment from the realm. He gave the Jews three months, from April to July, to sell their household affairs, livestock, and furniture. All larger property—lands, houses, vineyards, barns, wine-presses—was confiscated outright by the Crown.

Under the threat of exile, Rigord says, several Jews were converted to Christianity and stayed. How many did this is open to conjecture. Probably very few indeed. A converted Jew's property—because it was in-

variably assumed by law to have been amassed in sin—was seized in any case by the Crown so that he could begin life again on an "honest" basis. If a convert were accused and convicted of reversion to former business practices, he was put to death under torture.

Some Jews attempted a classic evasion: bribery in high places. Nobles and clergymen interceded, but Philip remained firm in spite of strong persuasion. Later, emperors and popes were to be astonished by his same stubborn attachment to a preconceived plan. Such perseverance was an anomaly in the Middle Age, when motives vanished as rapidly as they appeared, even in art, which clung to the times like a gorgeous burr.

In the end Philip outlasted all his enemies, and died at the head of a nation which, architecturally if not politically, deserves more than the name Augustan. None of the immense cathedrals that went up during his reign—Chartres, Bourges, Rheims, Amiens—carries his image; and all we have are the chroniclers' descriptions of the mature warrior, bald and sinewy as Caesar; but deeds reveal this man, as they do few others. Stubborn, but amazingly supple; cynical, wily, hard-fisted, but personally brave; a diplomatist of great skill, but scarcely literate; nominally devout, pious on occasion, but nevertheless the Crusader who abandoned Richard Coeur-de-Lion, to return and war on his ally's domains; unscrupulous to excess for an unscrupulous age, and brutal for a brutal age, plucking out eyes and breaking bones—yet withal so capable, so clearly intelligent, so attractive when he cared to be, that it is understandable why his contemporaries called him *li grans roys Phelippes*—the great King Philip.

In July 1182, he gave the final order, and all the Jews of the kingdom, with their wives, children, and retainers, carrying what baggage they could, crossed the frontiers of France. Where did they go? Most probably to the civilized south, to the protection of the brilliant and heretical court of Toulouse, and the great mercantile cities of Narbonne and Béziers, where the classic souvenir of Rome had never been completely lost, and where many of them eventually would be put to the sword along with the Albigensians in Simon de Montfort's crusade. Others went to the Rhineland, scattering eastward

to Prague. Not many could have wished to go far. The majority remained close to the borders of France, waiting to see if the seventeen-year-old King would relent, hoping he could not do without them—and finally he could not. But it would be sixteen years before his self-interest called them back.

THE Juiverie lay empty. The Synagogue was deserted, defiled, stripped of its riches. It is an eerie moment to enter this vanished temple, for it represents a limbo between epochs. Life in Western Europe would never be quite the same, for Christian no less than Jew, from this time on.

In basic design, the Synagogue was austere. It was a long, slender room no more than twenty by ninety feet—small, but in the class of Worms and Prague. A single portal opened on the Juiverie. Perhaps there were other entrances; there is no way of knowing. All of our information comes from the period after it was ceded to the Church, when it was rebuilt and utterly transformed.

This much may be said, however, from what has been learned of medieval synagogues in general. The exterior, like protective coloration, was extremely plain, perhaps to the point of rudeness. The Jew throughout the Middle Age took care to show only his most prosaic self, or more accurately, to conceal his special poetry. This was necessary, if one wished to retain his own poetry at all. A Jewish temple that stood higher than a neighboring church might be seized for that reason alone. Even for chants to be overheard in the street outside was enough to cost a congregation its place of worship.

But if God were missing from the hostile streets, he compensated the Jews with a pure concentration of divinity within the tabernacle. The interior was pure splendor. Few Gods have been more dazzling than the Jewish Lord of the Middle Age. He ruled with an intoxicating, semi-Oriental force, and demanded emotional psalms and ecstasies. Like the contemporary Christian God, he appreciated ingenious theologians. His sanctuary was decorated with silks and precious woods, and mosaics that had a look of Byzantium, and was lighted with hundreds of burning lamps. The emotion of the medieval Synagogue is lost now, as lost as

that of the medieval Church. Men, we say, have grown more reasonable, like their art, in which we are hard-pressed to find a trace of divinity. To guess at what the modern world has lost, we need only look at the northern door of the façade of Notre-Dame. There, beneath a monumental Triumph of the Virgin, sit three Prophets and three Kings, on either side of a Gothic Ark of the Covenant. All six figures are remarkable for their serenity, a grave handsome calm that belongs to the years shortly after 1200, but the three Prophets are particularly impressive. Sitting on a low bench, separated from each other by a graceful colonnade, they might have posed expressly in the Synagogue. The eye is taken with the scholarly, altogether civilized faces, and then loses its way in the lovely folds of their robes.

If the religion was defiantly Semitic, and mysteriously Eastern in tone, it had all the new artistic resources of the West at its disposal. The Synagogue of Paris had magnificent sculpture, like the Romanesque capitals that were lost when Nazi vandals destroyed the incomparable monument at Worms. It had the pure blue stained glass of the 12th century, like the windows that existed in the temple at London. True, there were no recognizable human images. That would have smacked of idolatry, and the rival faith. But there were regal lions of Judah, eagles, peacocks, flowers, and innumerable carved and painted abstractions that had no significance beyond their capacity to enchant.

This was the Synagogue which now lay vacant for a year, from July of 1182 to some time between spring and autumn in 1183, while the King deliberated whether the exile were permanent. Then came the pronouncement that put an end to Jewish life where it had flourished for centuries: *In the name of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity, Amen. We Philip, by grace of God King of the Franks . . . concede to the hand of Maurice, the venerable Bishop of Paris, the synagogue of the Jews of Paris, in which they prayed, to build a church there. . . .*

A NUMBER of other blows came at the same time. Twenty-four Jewish houses were given to the Cloth Merchants, on the street near the Synagogue, which thenceforth became known as the Rue des Drapiers.

Philip Augustus did not, as might be expected, part with these homes gratuitously; he demanded a quit-rent of one hundred pounds. On another street in the Cité, which received the name of Rue des Pelletiers, he gave a number of Jewish dwellings to the Furriers. Gradually, in a series of acts, the former Jewish properties were sold, rented, or presented outright to retainers as reward for services. Fields, vineyards, wine-presses all found their way into Christian hands, and the pattern was repeated throughout the kingdom.

When the Jews were recalled to France in 1198, it was to live on a totally different basis. They became indirect taxers of the population—"a sponge," one historian has written, "which was allowed to swell only to be repeatedly wrung dry." Existence ceased to be not only free but dignified, and was conducted in new quarters. In Paris, the Jews did not return to the island. They chose the Right Bank instead, and built a temple there, but it was not the same. The 13th century brought the marked costume and headdress, and an intensification of the pariah code. The next generation of Jews lived to see the Talmud publicly burned in Paris,* the most dramatic of a chain of disasters that ended in a perma-

nent expulsion in 1394. Only the French Revolution would make Paris habitable for Jews again.

In the meantime Bishop Maurice de Sully had consecrated the Synagogue to Saint Mary Magdalene, and this is the first church of the Madeleine that we know in Paris, a strange ancestor for the monument now so perfectly at home in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. As the years passed it was rebuilt again and again, so that not only its Jewish but its medieval character vanished. It became, too, a sort of upper-class church, the seat of the most powerful Guild Corporation of Paris—"la Grande Confrérie Notre-Dame"—which controlled mercantile life in the capital. Joinville worshipped there, strolling over from the Palace when he was not closeted with Saint Louis. Then came the Renaissance, and the Madeleine was enlarged and decorated in the new taste. Finally, in the furious moment of 1793, it was entered by the People and destroyed.

Destroyed, but not altogether. A few wretches lived in the ruins half a century longer, until the Second Empire rased what was left to make way for the Hospital of the Hôtel-Dieu. The Juiverie, too, lost its name and all else that the Middle Age had given it except when the rain falls, or the moon passes from a cloud, and like any neutral street it is struck with what is lovely and natural.

*See this writer's account of that event in COMMENTARY of May 1954.